

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AS-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 SAM-01 ACDA-05 (ISO) W

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O R 261435Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE 2313

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA SAUDI ARABIA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IRAN

COMIDEASTFOR

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

S E C R E T MANAMA 0859

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : MARR, BA

SUBJECT : MIDEASTFOR STATUS

REFERENCE : (A) STATE 174770

(B) MANAMA 0852

SUMMARY: IN JULY 26 MEETING, GOB FOREIGN MINISTER REFUSED TO BUDGE ON INSISTENCE GOB NOTIFY US IN WRITING IT EXPECTS MIDDLE EAST FORCE TO LEAVE BY MID-1977. FOREIGN MINISTER PROMISED TO RECONSIDER OUR APPROACH AND TO BE IN TOUCH JULY 28 AFTER DISCUSSING MATTER WITH CABINET. END SUMMARY

1. JULY 26 I SPENT ONE HOUR BUTTING HEADS WITH GOB FOREIGN MINISTER TRYING TO PERSUADE HIM TO ACCEPT APPROACH OUTLINED STATE REFTEL. STRESSED IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO NOT PUTTING A DEPARTURE DATE FOR MIDDLE EAST FORCE IN WRITING PREMATURELY IN ORDER TO RETAIN FLEXIBILITY WHICH MIGHT BE EXTREMELY NECESSARY TO GOB AS GULF SITUATION UNFOLDS. REPEATEDLY I HIT POINT THAT, ARMED WITH OUR WRITTEN ACCEPTANCE OF PRINCIPLE THAT DURATION MIDDLE EAST FORCE PRESENCE IS LIMIT-

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ED AND WITH TERMINATION PROVISIONS OF STATIONING AGREEMENT, GOB WOULD

BE IN FOOLPROOF POSITION TO CONFRONT ANY CRITICS AT HOME OR IN AREA. GOB, IF PRESSED, COULD SAY THAT ITS CURRENT POLICY PLANNING IS THAT IT WOULD BE ADVISABLE FOR U.S. NAVY TO DEPART BY MID-1977 BUT THAT IT IS PREMATURE TO FORMALIZE THIS, GIVEN TERMINATION PROCEDURES OF STATIONING AGREEMENT.

2. FOREIGN MINISTER IS QUITE PREPARED TO EXCHANGE NOTES ON JURISDICTION, TO ACCEPT OUR NOTE INDICATING INTENT TO LEAVE SIX MONTHS AFTER ANY GOB REQUEST FOR TERMINATION, AND TO ACCEPT OUR LETTER OF REASSURANCES WHICH INDICATES SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF NEGOTIATIONS, WITH ALL OF THESE DOCUMENTS DATED JULY 1. HE INSISTS, HOWEVER, ON:

(A) GOB'S MAKING SOME WRITTEN RESPONSE, PRESUMABLY IN REPLY TO OUR LETTER OF REASSURANCES, WHICH WOULD REFER TO TERMINATION NOTICE OF OCTOBER 20, 1973 AND OUR REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION DATED JULY 28, 1974, STATING FOR THE RECORD THAT GOB HAS RESCINDED TERMINATION NOTICE;

(B) INDICATING FORMALLY IN WRITING, IN DOCUMENT NOTED IN (A) ABOVE OR A SEPARATE DOCUMENT, THAT GOB HAS DECIDED U.S. NAVY PRESENCE SHOULD TERMINATE BY MID-1977.

3. IN DISCUSSING NEED FOR FLEXIBILITY, I ASKED FOREIGN MINISTER IF HE COULD VISUALIZE SITUATION IN WHICH GOB WOULD WANT MIDDLE EAST FORCE TO STAY AFTER 1977. FOREIGN MINISTER SAID GOB WOULD LIKE TO SEE SITUATION IN WHICH MIDDLE EAST FORCE WAS ENTHUSIASTICALLY PERCEIVED AS HAVING A FLAG-SHOWING MISSION IN ALL THE GULF, RENDERING VALUED TRAINING AND ADVISORY ASSISTANCE TO IRAN, SAUDI ARABIA AND KUWAIT. IN GOB'S VIEW, THIS WOULD MAKE MIDDLE EAST FORCE WELCOME THROUGHOUT THE GULF; IT WOULD BE THE U.S. NAVY'S GULF FLEET, NOT THE U.S. NAVY'S "BAHRAIN FLEET" AS AT PRESENT. GOB REJECTS ARGUMENT THAT MIDDLE EAST FORCE IS PRESENTLY WELCOME THROUGHOUT THE GULF SINCE NONE OF THE OTHER GULF STATES WILL STAND UP PUBLICLY TO DEFEND BAHRAIN'S HARBORING U.S. NAVY. IF THIS SITUATION CHANGES AND BAHRAIN'S NEIGHBORS SUPPORT U.S. NAVY'S PRESENCE, BAHRAIN, OF COURSE, WOULD WELCOME MIDDLE EAST FORCE IN THE AREA. CONCEPTUALLY U.S. NAVY WOULD NOT BE STATIONED IN BAHRAIN BUT GOB WOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE WITH U.S. NAVY'S USING BAHRAIN AS HOME FOR NAVY FAMILIES AND AS A RESUPPLY FACILITY. FOREIGN MINISTER CONTINUED THAT, UNTIL SUCH A CHANGE OF ATTITUDE COMES ABOUT AMONG BAHRAIN'S NEIGHBORS, BAHRAIN IS SUBJECTED TO UNBEARABLE POLITICAL PRESSURE IN RETAINING MIDDLE EAST FORCE AND MUST INDICATE THAT 1977 IS THE TERMINATION DATE IN ORDER

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TO GET LOCAL AND REGIONAL POLITICAL CRITICS OFF ITS BACK.

4. I URGED FOREIGN MINISTER TO LET ME SEE A DRAFT OF ANY LETTER GOB MIGHT INSIST ON SENDING US BEFORE ITS FORMAL DELIVERY AND HE ASSURED ME HE WOULD DO SO. I STRESSED THE SERIOUSNESS WHICH WE ATTACH TO OUR SUGGESTION TO HANDLE THIS MATTER ALONG LINES STATE REFTEL AND OUR DESIRE TO SEE THESE NEGOTIATIONS CONCLUDED PROMPTLY AND IN A MANNER WHICH WILL ENHANCE RATHER THAN SOUR U.S.-BAHRAINI RELATIONS.

I LEFT THE FOREIGN MINISTER A COPY OF OUR DRAFT LETTER PROPOSED STATE REFTEL URGING HE GIVE OUR POSITION THE MOST SERIOUS RECONSIDERATION IN THE TOTAL CONTEXT OF U.S.-BAHRAINI RELATIONS. HE PROMISED TO DO SO, TO DISCUSS THE QUESTION WITH THE CABINET, AND TO TRY TO GIVE ME A RESPONSE JULY 28.

5. COMMENT: THIS WAS THE TOUGHEST SESSION I HAVE HAD WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER DURING ANY ASPECT OF THIS LONG NEGOTIATION. I THINK I PULLED OUT ALL THE STOPS. HE DID NOT APPEAR TO BUDGE ONE BIT. IT IS OBVIOUS HE SUSPECTS THAT OUR UNWILLINGNESS TO SEE THE 1977 DATE APPEAR IN PRINT INDICATES OUR INTENTION TO PUT THE SCREWS TO BAHRAIN IN 1976 TO SEEK FURTHER EXTENSION OF U.S. NAVY PRESENCE AND THIS IS WHAT HE WANTS TO AVOID. HE REPEATEDLY MADE THE POINT THAT, SHOULD SOMETHING HAPPEN BETWEEN NOW AND 1977 WHICH WOULD MAKE IT IN BAHRAIN'S

DEMONSTRABLE INTEREST TO CONTINUE U.S. NAVY PRESENCE, GOB WOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE WHATSOEVER IN OVERCOMING ANY SEMANTIC INFLEXIBILITY WHICH MIGHT HAVE BEEN CREATED BY INFORMING US IN WRITING OF A 1977 "DEAD-LINE". HE ADDED THAT GOB HAD HOPED USG WOULD WELCOME A TWO YEAR "DEAD-

LINE" RATHER THAN A SIX MONTH "GRACE PERIOD" SINCE GOB COULD WELL TAKE POSITION THAT STATIONING AGREEMENT TERMINATED AS OF OCTOBER 1974.

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